



Fourth Quarter 2009 Job Vacancy Study

Help Wanted

But Not By Employers

Is Utah's economy embarking on a recovery? If so, expect the next study to be far less gloomy.

Results from the Department of Workforce Services' Fourth Quarter 2009 Job Vacancy Study (JVS) empirically confirm what many Utahns—and certainly job seekers—are all too familiar with, that is, that the demand for labor in Utah is not what it used to be. This deficiency in demand is commonly (and for the most part, rightfully) attributed to the affects of the well-publicized national recession which began in December of 2007. While the cause of Utah's relatively low labor demands may be apparent, Utah's demand for labor remains worthy of research and quantification.

During the fourth quarter of 2009, Metropolitan Utah—which is comprised of nine counties along the Wasatch Front—posted a job vacancy rate of 1.5 percent, meaning that, for every 100 jobs in the area there were 1.5 openings. By contrast, the 2008 study uncovered a rate of 1.8 percent, and the year before that the job vacancy rate was 3.3 percent. I could continue with the most melancholy of statistics, but

I'll present a simple graph instead. It seems that during the current downturn, there are a few industries that receive high levels of media attention for their economic difficulties. The finance, construction and manufacturing sectors come to mind as recipients of steady news coverage, although that list is by no means exhaustive. The accompanying graph illustrates the number of openings in the aforementioned industries during each year that the JVS was administered in Metro Utah.

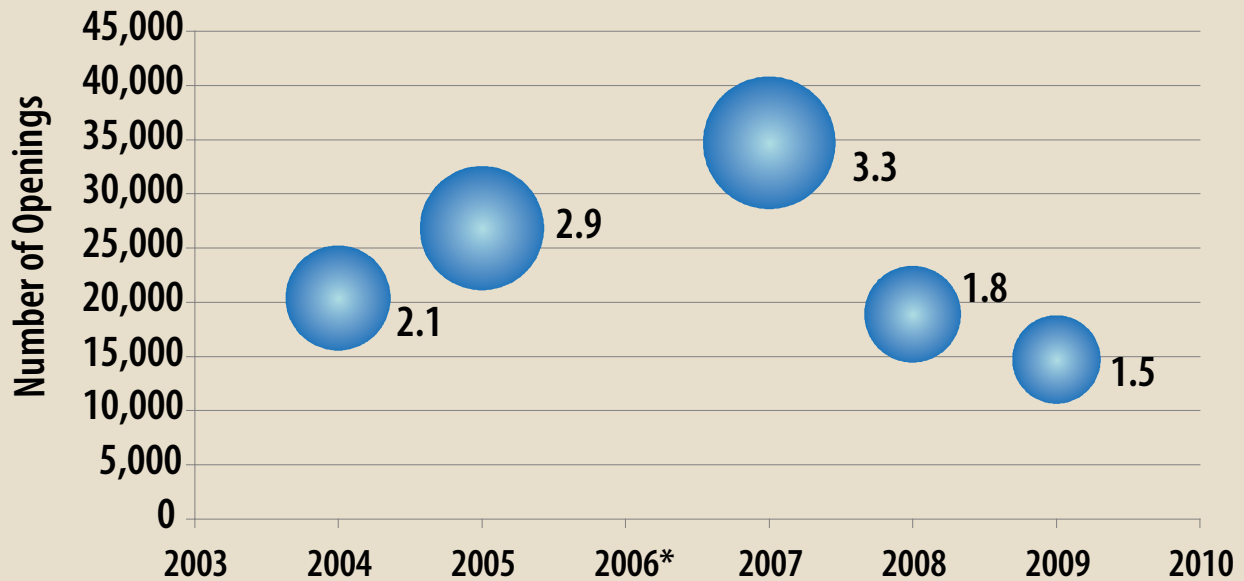
As the graph clearly indicates, finance, construction and manufacturing called for healthy amounts of labor during 2004, 2005 and 2007. In 2008 and 2009, however, those calls were severely muffled (and nearly muted in the construction industry).

At this point we'll focus on what's in the glass (or in this case what's in Utah's economy) rather than what is not. It turns out that the average offered wage for all openings in Metro Utah is up from \$13.40 an hour in 2008 to \$14.10

an hour most recently. Openings in the healthcare industry are the primary contributor to the increase in the regional average wage, as those openings accounted for 17.8 percent of all openings in the region and offered an average hourly wage of \$16.90. There were numerous openings with above-average offered wages. These included jobs in engineering, nursing and computer software development, just to name a few. Further, for those job seekers looking for immediate work, there were several occupations such as cashiers, customer service representatives and food preparation and serving workers that posted hundreds of openings.

Many economists believe that Utah's economy is embarking on a recovery. If that's the case, expect the next Job Vacancy Study to be far less gloomy. If they're wrong, maybe I'll write about something more cheery next year. Teenage vampires, anyone? ●

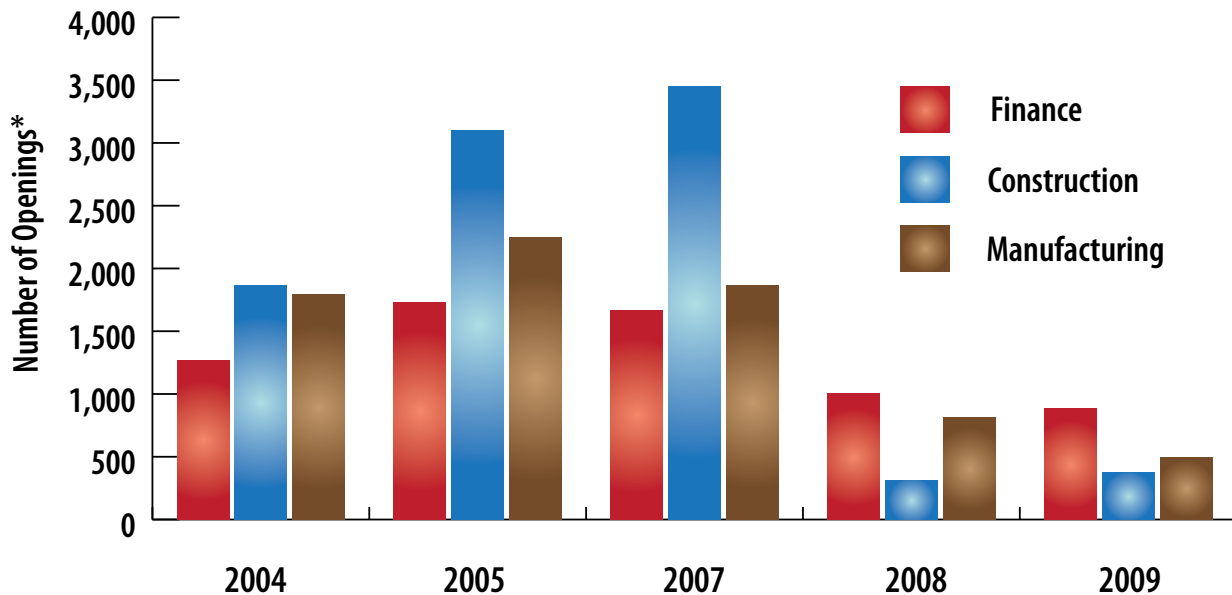
2004-2009 Metropolitan Job Vacancy Study Openings and Vacancy Rates



*Utah did not conduct a JVS in 2006

Source: Fourth Quarter 2004-2005, 2006-2009 Job Vacancy Studies, Utah Department of Workforce Services.

"Recession-Attention" Industries



*Openings data pertains to the Metropolitan Utah JVS area

Utah did not conduct a JVS in 2006

Source: Fourth Quarter 2004-2005, 2006-2009 Job Vacancy Studies, Utah Department of Workforce Services.